

**Abstract 667**

**TITLE:** Taking Stage: The NiteStar Program

**AUTHORS:** Berlin, C; Hantman, J (The NiteStar Program, New York, NY)

**ISSUE:** Rates of HIV and high-risk behavior among adolescents and young adults remain high, and innovative, effective prevention efforts are needed. Research shows that youth will listen to interventions that do not 'preach'; that are peer-driven; that rely on youth culture and language, and that are contextualized within other issues affecting their lives.

**SETTING:** In schools and community-based organizations; at conferences.

**PROJECT:** Founded in 1988, The NiteStar Program/STAR Theatre has initiated four program components. (1) Using a diverse youth cast, NiteStar performs 4 developmentally and age-appropriate original dramatic musical productions for youth from 5<sup>th</sup> grade through college age. Weaving together sharp public health messages with youth culture, the shows debunk myths, provide accurate information, and alter attitudes. Issues addressed include HIV/AIDS, sexual negotiation and activity, decision-making, pregnancy prevention, homosexuality, race, gender equity and others. After each performance, trained facilitators lead an interactive Q&A discussion with the audience. (2) NiteStar delivers a multiple-session interactive behavior change workshop series that utilizes small group methods. (3) Development and distribution of an eleven-part video series with accompanying leaders' guides. (4) Under a CDC DHAP National Partnerships grant, NiteStar provides technical assistance and training to youth and youth providers nationwide to equip them to utilize performing arts methods.

**RESULTS:** NiteStar has performed for approximately one million youth, youth provider, parents and caregivers since 1988. Evaluation of our behavior change workshop series shows that self-reported change occurs with a minimum of four interventions.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** Theater can powerfully depict complex youth realities, and involve youth audiences with the educators/performers in problem solving and moving toward healthier scenarios. On a local and national level, the demand for performances and for theater training is rising.

**PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Name:** Cydelle Berlin, Ph.D.

**Address:** The NiteStar Program, St. Luke's Roosevelt, 1090 Amsterdam Ave. #10A  
New York, NY 10025

**Telephone:** (212) 523-3599

**Fax:** (212) 523-3545

**E-mail:** [cberlin@slrhc.org](mailto:cberlin@slrhc.org)